



## Catching The Thermals

A sailplane flight over the lush Heber Valley and the surrounding mountains is an experience that is not soon forgotten.

Your seatbelt is strapped tight in the cockpit of the sailplane. Your pilot signals the tow plane ahead that you are ready to roll. Slowly the rope tightens between the two planes and you are moving down the runway. In a few seconds, you are off the ground climbing slowly toward Mt. Timpanogos. You can still see the snow on the sides of the 12,000 ft. mountain.

Soon as you and the tow plane are climbing, there are a few "bumps." While you wonder what they are, your pilot smiles, "A good day," he says. "The thermals are strong." This he explains, means that the heat generated on the ground will produce good lift and keep a motorless craft aloft with ease. Sailplanes are capable of staying in the sky for many hours and traveling several hundred miles on a good day. The next thing you notice is a "bang from the front of the glider" when the tow rope releases. Then silence, except for a whistle of the glider moving through the air. You are as free to soar on the currents of the air as the hawk. Your pilot enters a thermal and you rise swiftly over the hills. Boats on Deer Creek Reservoir below become specks. The green fields of the Valley grow smaller and the vast mountains spread out on the horizon.

Headed back toward the field and with a final bump on the runway, you are jolted back to reality. Gravity still prevails and all must end where it started. For about twenty minutes though, you have been in the sky soaring silently as the eagle.

High Valley Aviation at Heber Airport offers daily airplane and glider flights over Heber Valley and the Wasatch, Timpanogos, and Uinta Wilderness Ranges.